BCYD Lead Forward Conference 2026

first impressions

The Sermons Before the Sermon

OCTOBER 2026

JEREMY & HGLLY BATES

@HEYJERBATES

@HBATES3

BCYD Lead Forward Conference 2026

the bates'

Jeremy & Holly Bates
Pastors, Bethel Church, Penticton, BC



OCTOBER 2026

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

the sermons before the sermon

BCYD Lead Forward Conference 2026

bethel



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FIRST IMPRESSIONS

the sermons before the sermon

first impressions:

The question isn't simply,
"Did we welcome people today?"

The question is: *"Did the people who crossed our paths today walk away feeling that they mattered?"*





“everything preaches”

Along with our **STATED THEOLOGY,** our guests are experiencing our **LIVED THEOLOGY**

First Impressions aren’t just a hospitality strategy, they’re a key part to our discipleship strategy - removing unnecessary roadblocks so people can experience Jesus and His people.

the first 7 minutes

“Seven minutes is all you get to make a positive first impression.”

Nelson Searcy, Fusion



You have seven minutes:

- What would I notice first?
- What would confuse me?
- What might make me feel uncomfortable or uncertain?
- What would help me trust this church?
- What might make me decide not to return?

identifying the gaps

between our STATED theology and our LIVED theology:

A) THE MESSAGE OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

B) THE MESSAGE OF OUR CULTURE

C) THE MESSAGE OF OUR BEHAVIOIUR



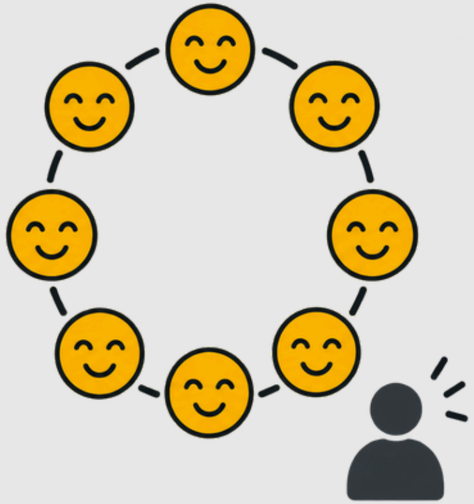


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crashing a private party

friendly isn't the same as welcoming....







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5 questions every guest is asking:



1) CAN I FIND MY WAY?
Our msg: “We’ve thought about you!”

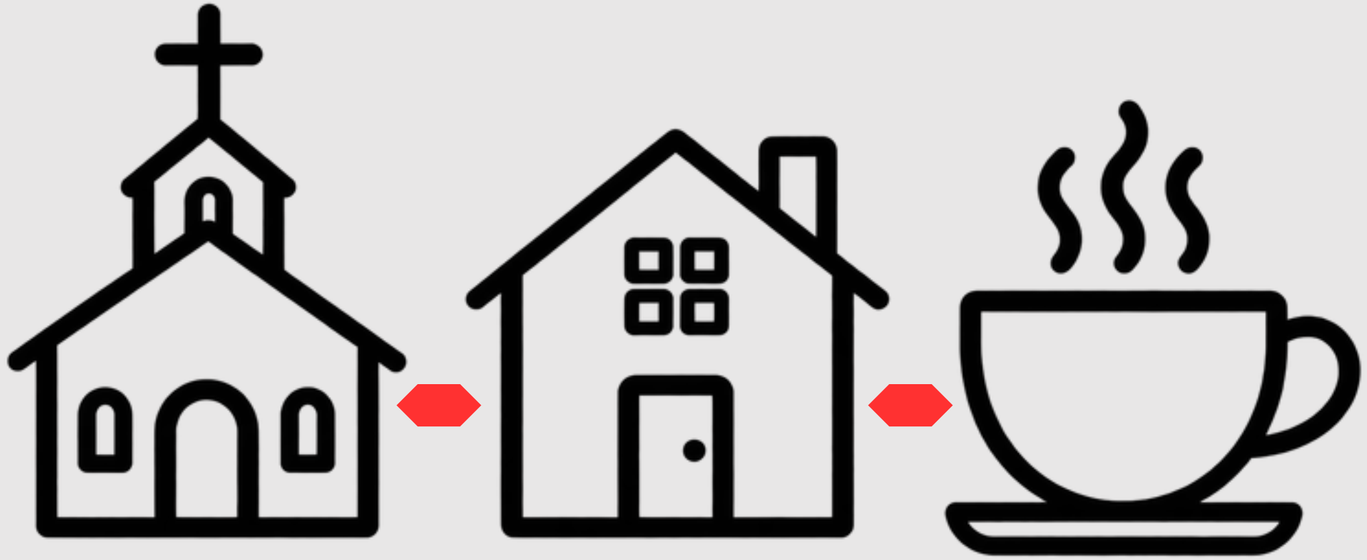
2) AM I SAFE?
Our msg: “You can trust us!”

3) DO I BELONG HERE?
Our msg: “There’s room for you here.”

4) DO THESE PEOPLE ACTUALLY CARE?
Our msg: “You are seen, not just processed.”

5) WHAT’S MY NEXT STEP?
Our msg: “We want to help you take your next step!”

“People move forward at the speed of trust.”



1st Time Guest ➤ Returning Guest ➤ Regular Attender ➤ Connected & Actively Engaged Member

on ramps...



rewriting the sermon...

- We say we believe: _____.
- But a guest might experience: _____.
- One thing we'll change is: _____.

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